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CIA/AF/Brief 77-037

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: OCT 2001

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(31)

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EAST ASIA BRIEF AP 77-037.4

1. //VIETNAM.4

AN OBSERVER WITH A SOUND KNOWLEDGE OF VIETNAMESE POLITICS HAS PROVIDED AN INTERESTING ASSESSMENT OF VIETNAM'S FOREIGN POLICY AND POSSIBLE TACTICS IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE US.//4

//THE OBSERVER NOTES THAT VIETNAMESE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS AND THE GENERALLY LOW PROFILE THEY HAVE MAINTAINED ARE DESIGNED, IN PART, TO STRENGTHEN THEIR POSITION WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY BEFORE THEY BEGIN SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE US. HE FEELS, HOWEVER, THAT THE VIETNAMESE OVERESTIMATE THE LEVERAGE THESE TIES WILL HAVE WITH THE US.//4

//HE BELIEVES THAT, LARGELY BECAUSE OF POOR BUREAUCRATIC COMMUNICATIONS, THE VIETNAMESE HAVE LITTLE INFORMATION ON MIAS. IN HIS VIEW, THE RECENT RELEASE OF 12 NAMES WAS THE RESULT OF CONSIDERABLE EFFORT AND WAS

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NOT MERELY THE CYNICAL DISCLOSURE OF A FEW NAMES FROM A MUCH LARGER LIST. IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT US PERSONNEL WOULD EVER BE ALLOWED TO CARRY OUT SEARCHES FOR MIAS OR KIAS WITHIN VIETNAM.//4

//ALTHOUGH HANOI MAY INITIALLY APPEAR DURING NEGOTIATIONS TO BREAK THE LINKAGE BETWEEN THE MIA AND WAR REPARATIONS ISSUES, HE BELIEVES AN ULTIMATE CONNECTION IS INEVITABLE UNLESS THE VIETNAMESE CAN OBTAIN WHAT THEY WANT FROM THE US. HE ALSO SUGGESTS THAT THE VIETNAMESE MAY NOW BELIEVE THEY HAVE OVERPLAYED THEIR HAND ON THE MIA ISSUE AND WORRY THAT DOMESTIC PRESSURE ON THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION TO OBTAIN A FULL ACCOUNTING FROM HANOI IS SLACKENING.//4

//IN THIS REGARD, THE PRIMARY INTEREST OF THE VIETNAMESE IS ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE--INCLUDING AID FROM THE US. IN THE OBSERVER'S VIEW, IT SHOULD BE RELATIVELY UNIMPORTANT TO THE VIETNAMESE WHETHER US AID IS CONSIDERED "WAR REPARATIONS" OR "HUMANITARIAN AID." HE SUGGESTS

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THAT THE US MAY BE ABLE TO STRING OUT ANY PAYMENTS AND MAKE SUBSEQUENT INSTALLMENTS CONTINGENT UPON A PROPER VIETNAMESE ATTITUDE IN APPLYING AND EXPLAINING THE AID. HE ALSO SPECULATES THAT THE THIEU REGIME'S FROZEN ASSETS IN THE US MAY BE A MORE IMPORTANT NEGOTIATING CARD THAN IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED.//Y

//AS SUGGESTED BY VIETNAMESE SENSITIVITY TO THE CRITICISM OF US ANTI-WAR ACTIVISTS, THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE MIGHT WORK TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE US IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. THE VIETNAMESE ARE BECOMING AWARE THAT INTERNATIONAL OPINION APPLIES TO THEM AS WELL AS TO OTHER COUNTRIES, AND THAT IT MIGHT DELAY OR HINDER THE ATTAINMENT OF THEIR OBJECTIVES.//Y

//IN ADDITION, THE OBSERVER NOTES THAT THE VIETNAMESE APPEAR TO BE TRYING TO HOLD THE SOVIETS AT ARM'S LENGTH POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY AND TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES AS FAR AS POSSIBLE FROM SINO-SOVIET COMPETITION.

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